



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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POLONCARZ, BURSTEIN HIGHLIGHT FALL HARVEST OF HEALTHY, LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD

County Executive, Health Commissioner Stress Economic & Health Benefits of Local Agriculture

ERIE COUNTY, NY—Today, Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz was joined by Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein in touting the benefits of locally produced foods for both a healthy diet and a healthy local economy. It is estimated that agricultural sales contribute \$117 million into the Erie County economy, while at the same time providing consumers with healthy, locally produced foods and agricultural products at grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions. The Erie County Department of Health ("ECDOH") will soon oversee a Food Policy Council charged with the promotion of local agricultural products to connect nutritious local foods with countywide markets.

"The importance of local agriculture to our economy, as well as to our diets, is often overlooked. In Erie County, a healthy agricultural industry is needed for our economy to flourish," **said Poloncarz**. "As I noted in my ['Initiatives for a Smart Economy'](#) address, we need to increase farmers' access to markets here in Erie County through the development of a Food Policy Council, which will connect healthy, locally-grown foods to urban markets and consumers who will benefit from our agricultural wealth."

Only 26% of Erie County residents consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, as recommended by the USDA, and approximately six in ten adults in Erie County are overweight or obese. "Food deserts", geographic areas with little or no access to grocery stores with fresh, affordable local foods, are a direct cause for the over-consumption of highly processed foods that lead to higher rates of overweight and obesity. Ominously, obesity in children is rising nationwide and the prevalence of Type II diabetes in children is becoming more and more common.

Burstein added, "This is a great time of year for consumers to take advantage of all the health benefits fresh fruits and vegetables offer. As the harvest comes in, parents and caregivers will know that the produce they are serving to their families came from local farms and wasn't shipped cross-country or internationally, which often means adding preservatives and other substances. In addition, there are many creative ways to cook and serve local produce in healthy ways that increase the flavors, preserve the nutrients, and don't add fats or calories. Fresh, wholesome local produce is always a good choice, and we have many recipes and nutrition tips on our website."

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Health and nutritional resources, visit

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=nutrition>

For a listing of WNY Farmers Markets, visit http://www.bestofwny.com/farmers_market/

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